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*St. Bland*

# High Church Pretensions Disproved :

OR,

## METHODISM AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

BY THE

*REV. E. H. DEWART.*

**Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged.**

TORONTO :

METHODIST BOOK ROOM, 80 KING STREET EAST.

1877.

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B.A., D.D.

# High Church Pretensions Disproved ;

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## METHODISM AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

BY THE  
REV. EDWARD HARTLEY DEWART.

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SECOND EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED.

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But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.—THE REDEEMER,

To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.—ISAIAH.

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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I hail with satisfaction the increasing good feeling between the Churches. Union in doing the work of the Master is doubtless better than hostile controversy. But I have no sympathy with those who are liberal, merely because they think there is nothing worth contending for. The desire for peace carries us too far, when it makes us shrink from frankly condemning what is false, and defending what we believe to be true. We should "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." The errors of the ritualists and sacramentals I believe to be a serious departure from the simplicity of the Gospel. They are misleading guides, who should be sharply rebuked, and their assumptions explicitly repudiated. A system that teaches for doctrine the commandments of men, and places matters of Church ritual above the personal experience of forgiveness and regeneration, deserves severe condemnation.

E. H. D.

NOV 13 1950

## HIGH-CHURCH PRETENSIONS DISPROVED.

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### I.

#### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THIS little tract is not written to provoke controversy. It is no part of its design to assail a sister denomination. It is written in self-defence, against the frequent attacks of Episcopalian ministers, who seek to unsettle the faith of Methodists by representing Methodism as an unauthorized and schismatic organization, without a valid ministry, genuine sacraments, or the characteristics of a true and Scriptural branch of the Christian Church. The main points dwelt upon by these clerical proselyters are,—that John Wesley lived and died “a clergyman of the Church of England ;”—that the separation of Methodism from the National Church and its becoming an independent Church were wrong, and in open violation of Wesley’s principles and injunctions ;—that modern Methodists have abandoned Wesley’s principles, so that if he were now living he would disown them ;—that as the Methodist Church has been constituted in an irregular and unscriptural manner, neither its ministry nor sacraments are valid ;—that all Methodists who desire to be the true followers of John Wesley, should leave the Wesleyan communion and join the Church of England. The numerous recent appeals to Methodists to allow themselves to be absorbed by “the Church” are well known to the public.

The men who pursue these tactics are generally strongly tinged with semi-popish views of the efficacy of the sacraments, as the main channels of grace and salvation. They have great faith in the value of an unbroken succession of Episcopal ordinations from the apostles to the present time, which they regard as essential to a valid ministry. They are generally very exclusive and supercilious in their attitude towards ministers of other Churches, while cherishing a respectful regard for the Romish Church as a true, though erring branch of the Church of Christ. They do not generally apply to themselves the terms Presbyters or Ministers ; but love to call themselves "priests,"—a name never applied to designate Christian pastors in the New Testament. Their sermons are much more largely occupied with talk about the Church and the sacraments than with Christ and his salvation from the guilt and power of sin. Many of them speak with contempt of conversion, the witness of the Spirit, and spiritual peace and joy, as taught and experienced among the Methodists, as if these things were unscriptural delusions. They deem such outward things as the reception of the sacraments from priestly hands, and membership in a Church with a ministry in "the succession," a better proof of Christian manhood than "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Indeed, the Church is commonly spoken of as if it was in some sense the instrument of salvation—a sort of ship, in which all who take passage may rest satisfied that they shall be brought in safety to the desired haven.

I give this brief description of these Anglican "priests" in order that they may be recognized by the people whom they seek to disturb ; and also, that it may be clearly understood that I am not writing against the godly and liberal ministers and laymen of the Church of England, many of

whom I cordially recognize as brethren and fellow-workers in Christ, who find better employment than proselyting from other Churches, or unchurching Christians of other denominations ; but against the teaching of a sect in that Church which, however sincere in their convictions, I firmly believe cherish unscriptural views of the Church of Christ, and are sadly wanting in the charity and liberality of New Testament Christianity.

In this brief essay, I undertake to show that those High Churchmen who charge the modern Methodists with having abandoned John Wesley's principles, and being schismatic and unscriptural organizations, base these allegations on assumptions respecting Methodism that are not historically correct, and on theories respecting the Christian Church and the ministerial office that are neither sustained by Scripture nor sound reason.

*I wish at the outset to repudiate as unwarranted the common assumption of our Anglican assailants that Mr. Wesley's expressed sentiments respecting the relationship of Methodism to the Church of England, or against separation, should irrevocably settle the whole question for all time. Our Episcopalian friends may save themselves the trouble of multiplying proofs of John Wesley's attachment to the Church of England ; or of his having on several occasions declared that the Methodists ought not to separate from it. From time to time, quotations from old letters or other writings are published by "Churchmen," as if they were startling discoveries that should fill the whole Methodist world with dismay. They reveal the ignorance of those who make such ado about them, rather than of those whom they are intended to enlighten. All intelligent Methodists will freely admit that Mr. Wesley was at first a very High Churchman, that he frequently expressed strong attachment to the Church of*

England, and his judgment that his people should not separate from it. But we should not isolate these expressions from his life. We must take into consideration the modifying sentiments expressed at other times, his own deliberate acts of separation, the principles that guided his whole public life, and what he himself called "the vehement prejudices of his education," in order to rightly estimate the true value of these expressions of sentiment and opinion.

We admit, without dispute, Wesley's expressions at different times against separation from the Church of England. We cherish a high regard for his opinions and counsels on any matter where all the facts were known to him. But it is a mistake to suppose that we regard him as an infallible pope whose judgment on a matter of expediency, expressed a hundred years ago, we dare not criticise or reject. We claim the same right to exercise our deliberate judgment, as to what is most for God's glory and for the good of our own branch of the Church, that Wesley claimed for himself in his day. The true followers of Wesley are not those who accept with unquestioning faith everything that he believed and taught ; but those who seek to know what is right and true with the same earnestness with which he sought ; and who adopt new methods of usefulness, which they believe to be best, with the same decision and independence that distinguished him. As Mr. S. D. Waddy recently said in the *Methodist Recorder* : " Wesley shaped our history during his own lifetime ; but not for all time. He had not the gift of prophecy. If any man could tell us exactly what Wesley would have said or done under existing circumstances, it would be entitled to respectful consideration ; but after all, it would not be authoritative. But we ask not what he did say then, but what he would say now. The rest is idle." There can be no doubt that if Mr. Wesley was living to-day,



when gross popery and gross infidelity are openly taught by the paid clergy of the Established Church, which seems nearly helpless to remove the evil, he would not have the slightest sympathy with those who think Methodism should dissolve her organization, arrest her operations, call home her missionaries, and forever disappear from sight among the heterogeneous elements of the Established Church. He could not sanction such a movement, without being recreant to the principles and motives that governed his course during his whole life.

With the whole experience of over a century of Methodist history to teach them, the Methodists of to-day claim to be in a far better position to judge of the expediency, or inexpediency, of separation from the Established Church, than Mr. Wesley was in when he expressed these opinions against separation. It is true, that under the influence of the prejudices of his education he unguardedly said that if the Methodists left the Church of England, he feared God would leave them. But the past history of Methodism proves, beyond all question, that he was wrong in saying this. His fear was groundless. The grandest successes of Methodism, both in England and America, were achieved after his death. The one year, in which the sacraments were not administered, was the first in which there was a decline in the number of members. After the settlement of the sacramental question in England, the Wesleyan Church witnessed glorious ingatherings, such as had never been seen during the life of Wesley. There can now be no doubt, that the delay of Mr. Wesley, to allow his Societies to enjoy the full rights and privileges of an independent Church, operated unfavorably to the progress of Methodism. This delay was the greatest mistake of his life. In view of these facts, it is the weak resort of a weak cause, for High Churchmen to quote,

as an infallible prophecy that should confound the Methodists, an opinion that time has amply proved to be an error and a mistake.

As Wesley selected some of his writings to be a standard of doctrine for his Societies, all appeals to Wesley's views should be made to these standard works, and not to what he himself deliberately excluded from that standard. Yet Anglican priests constantly pick out from Wesley's early and miscellaneous writings certain expressions that seem to favor their views, as if all his opinions were accepted by both parties as an infallible standard of appeal. But when he says anything that does not suit them, he is no authority at all with them. It is more adroit than honest to play "fast and loose" with Wesley's views in this manner. If the Anglican contemners of Methodism do not accept Mr. Wesley's actions as a reformer, and his opinions on questions of Church order, as a standard that cannot be repudiated, they have no right to hurl them, as unanswerable arguments, at those who claim the same right of independent judgment as themselves. If they fully accept Wesley, it would be easy to show that his principles and teachings utterly condemn their unscriptural theories and pretensions. They should also remember, that if the course of modern Methodism is clearly wrong, Wesley's favorable opinion could not make it right; and if in harmony with God's word, the want of his endorsement cannot make it wrong. But, though we claim for ourselves as Methodists, the liberty of judgment and action which every living Church must possess, we are far from being disposed to admit the correctness of Anglican allegations respecting Mr. Wesley's views, and the historic position of Methodism with relation to the Church of England, before and since his death.

## II.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF WESLEY AND OF METHODISM  
TO THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

1. In all these attacks on modern Methodism, it is strangely taken for granted, as something that scarcely requires proof, *that during Mr. Wesley's life Methodism was an organic part of the Church of England, and that after his death, contrary to his injunctions, there was a formal separation or secession, by which the Methodist Societies assumed a relationship to that Church wholly different from what they had sustained during his life.*

Neither of these assumptions is true. While High Churchmen are eagerly catching at anything in Wesley's writings that seems capable of being turned against modern Methodists, Anglican priests have never had the manliness and candor to state the whole facts of the case fully and fairly. They keep back and suppress everything that does not help their assumptions. But it must not be forgotten that many of the early preachers, and during Mr. Wesley's life, thousands of the members in the Societies, had never belonged to the English Church. Dr. Etheridge says that only a minority had been members of the National Church; "others were accustomed to hear the gospel among the Non-conformists, but the greater mass of them belonged to no Church." How then could such people be said to secede from a Church to which they never belonged? At a later period, in a similar manner, through the labors of Bourne and Clowes, the Primitive Methodist body began. It had its birth in revivals of religion, that had not the slightest resemblance to a secession from the National Church; it grew up wholly outside of the Establishment.

And of John Wesley's connection with the Established

Church of England, a great deal more has been made, for proselyting purposes, than the plain facts will justify. He did not "remain all his life a clergyman of that Church," in any sense that can help the cause of those who desire to use his example for the condemnation of modern Methodists. He was disowned by the Church as a minister, and treated with contempt by the clergy for a generation, until some men found their way into her pulpits, whose religious life was a result of the great Methodist reformation, in which he was the chief instrument. He completely broke away from submission to the authority of the Church. He organized Societies, which had no organic connection with it; and over which it had not the slightest control. He ordained preachers to administer the sacraments, where he thought this necessary or expedient; and made legal provision for the independent organized existence of the Methodist Connection after his death. He prepared a constitution for an independent Methodist Church in America; ordained Coke a superintendent, and appointed him and Asbury to ordain ministers to meet the requirements of the American Church. He ordained Alexander Mather to be a similar superintendent of the English Connection. Except that he had been ordained by Bishop Potter, and never was expelled, he had little claim to be called "a clergyman of the Church of England." He held no pastoral charge, nor appointment of any kind, under the authorities of that Church; and acted in all things independently of its ecclesiastical sanctions or authority. If any one of Wesley's preachers had taken up such an independent position in relation to Methodism as he took in respect to the Church of England, and still claimed that he had not left the Methodist body, would Wesley have admitted his claim to be in good standing in the Methodist Society? Certainly

not. Wesley's relation to the Church cannot possibly sustain what it is cited to prove. Every Methodist minister in England to-day might hold a similar kind of relationship to the English Church to what Wesley held, without his doing so interfering with the separate and independent existence of the Wesleyan Church. In the face of these facts, how can it be maintained that up to Wesley's death the Methodist Societies remained connected with the National Church? Some of its founders had been ordained by bishops of that Church; and many of its members had been baptized in it, and continued to attend its services; but the Methodist Societies, as an organization, never had any connection with the Church of England, and therefore could not secede from it. Why are these important facts of Wesley's history studiously ignored by Bishop Wordsworth and other High Churchmen, who profess to admire Wesley?

Though quoting the strong language sometimes used by Wesley against separation, without explaining what he meant by separation, or what he said and did at other times on the other side of the question, may mislead those who are ignorant of the whole facts, it is not a candid method to pursue. A full and impartial examination of all Mr. Wesley's utterances on this point will show, that while from educational prejudices, and the strong pressure of his brother Charles and other High Church clergymen, he held out against a formal separation in England, he nevertheless sympathized with those who urged the need of assuming all the rights and privileges of a Christian Church—that he was deeply impressed by their arguments, and clearly foresaw that such a development was inevitable, and yet took no action to prevent it. I can only cite a few of his deliverances on this question, to substantiate what I have here asserted.

As early as 1755 the question of separation and independence was debated in the Conference for three days; and the conclusion arrived at was, that whether it was lawful or not, it was not expedient to separate from the Church. Of those who argued in favor of independence, Wesley himself admitted, that though he "did not fluctuate, yet he could not answer the arguments." He afterward wrote, "I have no fear about this matter, I only fear the preachers' or the people's leaving, not the Church, but the love of God and inward or outward holiness." "Church or no Church," he again says, "we must attend to the work of saving souls." The same year, 1755, after forcibly stating, in a letter to the Rev. Samuel Walker, the arguments urged against continuing to attend the services of the Church, or receiving the sacraments from men "who neither *lived* the gospel, *taught* it, nor *knew* it," he says: "I will freely acknowledge, *that I cannot answer these arguments to my own satisfaction*, so that my conclusion that I cannot yet give up 'that it is lawful to continue in the Church,' *stands almost without any premises that can bear its weight.*"

In the same letter, after speaking of open air preaching, the formation of Societies, preaching by lay preachers, and extemporaneous prayer in public worship, he goes on to say: "And were we pushed on this side, were no alternative allowed, *we should judge it our bounden duty, rather wholly to separate from the Church, than to give up any of these points.* Therefore, if we cannot stop a separation, without stopping lay preachers, the case is clear, we cannot stop it at all." These things could not have been maintained without independence of the National Church. In the Minutes he records the opinion, that there is no Scriptural authority for a National Church, which he designated "a merely political

institution;" and also says, "If any bishop wills that I should not preach the gospel his will is no law to me."

The Minutes of 1786 contain a sort of apology, or defence of his "irregularities," in which, after referring to his ordinations for Scotland and America among other things, he says, "These are the steps which, not of choice, but of necessity, I have slowly and deliberately taken. If anyone is pleased to call this separating from the Church he may; but the law of England does not call it so; nor can anyone be properly said so to do, unless out of conscience, he refuses to join in the service and partake of the sacraments administered therein." This and other statements show that Mr. Wesley and modern "Churchmen" do not mean the same thing by separation. After the ordination of Pawson, Hanby, and Taylor by Mr. Wesley at the Conference of 1785, Charles Wesley wrote to him, reminding him that he had been reading over again his "Reasons against Separation," and entreating him, with the most solemn appeals, "to stop and proceed no farther." He says, "You told me they would separate by-and-bye. The Doctor (Coke) tells us the same. His Methodist Episcopal Church in Baltimore is intended to beget a Methodist Episcopal Church here. You know he comes around with your authority to make us all Dissenters. One of your sons in London told me, that not a preacher in London would refuse orders from the Doctor," and more in the same fault-finding, alarming style. In his reply to this and other letters in the same vein, Wesley tells his brother, "For forty years I have been in doubt what obedience is due to 'heathenish priests and mitred infidels.'" He further says that the most pious and sensible clergymen he had consulted were as much puzzled about it as himself; that he felt under no obligation to obey the bishops further than the laws of the

land required ; that he believed himself to be a Scriptural bishop, as much as any man in Europe, and having therefore a right to ordain ; that the uninterrupted succession he knew to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove ; but that he had declined to exercise that right, merely in obedience to the laws of the land ; that he still acknowledged the authority of "mitred infidels," but sometimes with a doubting conscience ; that by separation he meant not going to the Church any more—and then adds, "all these 'Reasons against a Separation from the Church' *in this sense*, I subscribe to still." Charles still pressed him with the statement of Lord Mansfield to himself, that "ordination was separation," which could hardly be denied. John replies : "You say I separate from the Church. I say I do not. If you cannot or will not help me yourself, do not hinder those who can and will. I must and will save as many souls as I can while I live, *without being careful about what may possibly be when I die.*" Still later, he maintains that his ordinations do not mean separation, and he replies to the objection :—"But for all this is it not possible there may be such a separation after you are dead," in these words : "*Undoubtedly it is.* But what I said at our first Conference about forty years ago, I say still, 'I dare not omit doing what good I can while I live, for fear of evils that may follow, when I am dead.'" In this correspondence he quoted a line, in which Charles had called the National clergy "heathenish priests and mitred infidels." Charles hastened to disown and renounce the sentiment. Wesley replies, "Your verse is a sad truth. I see fifty times more of England than you do ; and *I find few exceptions to it.*" This is a dark picture.

On several occasions he defended the propriety of holding service in Dublin, London, and other places, in the hours of Church service. And in all his chapels, even before he



ordained any of his own preachers, the sacraments were administered as frequently as he and the limited staff of ordained clergymen available could supply them ; though he inconsistently persisted in maintaining that this was not separating from the Church. Methodist congregations, which had regular preaching and regular sacraments, cannot be regarded by modern Anglicans, as congregations of the Established Church ; nor could they have been so regarded by Mr. Wesley himself. Neither should it be forgotten, that during his life, most of the preachers received licenses to preach under an Act passed in the reign of William and Mary, "for exempting their Majesties' Protestant subjects, *dissenting from the Church of England*, from certain penalties."

Charles Wesley does not agree with those High Churchmen of our day who maintain that John Wesley and Methodism remained during his life in close and satisfactory connection with the Church of England ; for he believed, that in ordaining ministers and providing for the administrations of the sacraments, "his brother had acted contrary to all his declarations, protestations, and writings." Charles also wrote in 1760 to Grimshaw, "Our preachers are mostly licensed, and so are Dissenting Ministers. They took out their licenses as Protestant Dissenters." Grimshaw replied : "The Methodists are no longer members of the Church of England. They are as real a body of Dissenters from her as the Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, or any body of Independents." These are witnesses that should not be repudiated by Episcopalians.

The following statement of Mr. Wesley—quoted very pertinently by the Rev. W. Hudson in his reply to the Bishop of Lincoln as referring to a place in the diocese of Lincoln—shows clearly that he was fully aware that complete separation from the Established Church was inevitable. He

says: "I fain would prevent the members here from leaving the Church; but I cannot do it. As Mr. G. is not a pious man, but rather an enemy to piety, who frequently preaches against the truth, and those that hold and love it, I cannot with all my influence persuade them either to hear him, or to attend the sacrament administered by him. *If I cannot carry this point even while I live, who then can do it when I die?* And the case of Epworth is the case of every Church, where the minister neither loves nor preaches the Gospel. The Methodists will not attend his ministrations. What then is to be done?" (Wesley's Works, vol. iv., p. 413.)

Even Charles Wesley saw what was coming, for he wrote to one of the preachers, "after our departure you must become either Church or Dissenting ministers." Yet, it is most significant, that though Mr. Wesley knew the convictions of many of his preachers on the subject—though he saw and felt the necessity of more fully providing the sacraments for the Societies that were left without them, unless, in most cases, they received them from profane and ungodly men, some of whom would not admit Methodists to the sacraments; and though he evidently foresaw that the Connection must either be broken up, or assume fully all the functions of a Church, yet in these standards, by which he limited and defined the powers of the Conference, he left not a sentence that could be construed, as intending to prevent the Connection taking upon itself all the rights and obligations of an independent Church.

In his address to the candidates at the Newcastle Conference of 1873, that point was well brought out by Rev. Luke H. Wiseman. He said: "Look, then, at the trust deeds of the Wesleyan chapels. These are all (with rare exceptions) framed on Wesley's 'Deed of Declaration'; an instrument

the validity of which, thanks to resolute opposition, has been established by the highest legal authority. There you find an elaborate definition of the powers of the Conference; there by a single line Wesley could have prevented the members of that Conference from administering the sacraments. But that line was left unwritten. The omission could not have been accidental; for he was at that time in the midst of controversy on this very subject. A single line in that deed has limited our term of residence in a circuit to three years, and you know how rigidly the rule is still maintained. A similar restriction with regard to ordination or the administration of the sacraments would in law have been equally binding; but the line was left unwritten. By the most solemn act of his public life, John Wesley left the preachers and people free to act upon their own judgment with reference to the Church of England. The same may be said in regard to the *Sermons and Notes on the New Testament*, and the collection of Hymns prepared by Mr. Wesley for public worship. One clearly-worded sentence in the standard sermons could have deprived us of the right of attaching Wesley's name to this day's ceremonial, but no such sentence can be found.

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It is true that he frequently exhorted both preachers and people not to leave the Church of England, and that in one published sermon (not in the standard series) he employs strong language on this subject. But we must remember what he himself called 'The vehement prejudices of his education'—we must remember his protestations that it was 'for peace sake' he gave such counsel. And personal preferences, or considerations of expediency a century ago, cannot outweigh the great facts I have mentioned. Occasional exclamations attested the strength of his personal feeling on this subject. But in no published document of an

authoritative character, neither in the Sermons, nor in the Hymns, nor in the Expositions, nor, above all, in the Deed of Declaration, did he insert a word which could restrain the free action of his Societies in regard to the Establishment. He saw the inevitable direction of the current, and he religiously abstained from interference. If he were now amongst us he would doubtless apply to English Methodism the language which, during his lifetime, he applied to America: 'As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the State and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive Church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free.' These facts, which cannot be gainsayed, show that Wesley's professions of attachment to "the Church" did not prevent him taking a course which rendered an independent Methodist Church inevitable.

2. Another baseless assumption commonly made by the Sacramentarian opponents of modern Methodism is, *that if Wesley was now living he would condemn the present Methodist Church as an unauthorized and schismatical organization, and not a true Church.* Bishop Wordsworth recently told the Methodists of Lincolnshire, that if Wesley could come back to us, he would tell us "that the essence of schism is to make a separation or rent in a Church, or *from a Church.*" Mr. Wesley's known views respecting schism, and respecting what constitutes a Scriptural Church, amply prove that he could not consistently regard the Methodist Church of to-day as either schismatic or unscriptural. Mr. Wesley most certainly did not hold that the peaceable and conscientious separation of any number of persons from a Church of which they disapproved, is a wicked and schismatic division.

In his note on 1 Cor. xi. 18, he has the following:—" *In the Church*—in the public assembly—I hear there are *schisms* among you, and I partly believe it.—That is, I believe it of some of you. It is plain that by *schisms* is not meant any separation from the Church, but uncharitable divisions in it; for the Corinthians continued to be one church; and notwithstanding all their strife and contention, there was no separation of any one party from the rest, with regard to external communion. And it is in the same sense that the word is used, 1 Cor. i. 10; xii. 25; which are the only places in the New Testament beside this, where Church schisms are mentioned. Therefore the indulging any temper contrary to the tender care of each other is the true Scriptural schism. This is, therefore, a quite different thing from that orderly separation from corrupt Churches, which later ages have stigmatized as schism, and have made a pretence for the vilest cruelties, oppressions, and murders, that have troubled the Christian world. Both heresies and schisms are here mentioned in very near the same sense; unless by schisms be meant, rather, those inward animosities which occasion heresies; that is, outward divisions or parties; so that whilst one said, 'I am of Paul,' another, 'I am of Apollos,' this implied both schism and heresy. So wonderfully have later ages distorted the words *heresy* and *schism* from their Scriptural meaning. Heresy is not, in all the Bible, taken for 'an error in fundamentals,' or in anything else; nor *schism* for any separation from the outward communion of others. Therefore, both *heresy* and *schism*, in the modern sense of the words, are sins that the Scripture knows nothing of; but were invented merely to deprive mankind of the benefit of private judgment and liberty of conscience." This sound and reasonable view of the Scriptural meaning of "schism" will be seen to apply much more pointedly to the discordant par-

ties and divisions which exist within the Established Church to which the Wesleyans are so patronizingly invited to "return" than to anything that distinguishes the origin or present condition of the Methodist Churches in Europe and America.

Neither do Wesley's published views, as to what constitutes a Scriptural Church, give any countenance to the exclusive views of High Church priests, or to their efforts to make it appear that he would condemn the Methodist Church of to-day, as not being a true, Scriptural Church. In his sermon, "Of the Church," in answer to the question, "What is the Church?" he says: "The Catholic or universal Church is all the persons in the universe, whom God hath so called out of the world, as to entitle them to the preceding character; as to be 'one body,' united by 'one spirit;' having 'one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in them all.' That part of this great body, of the Universal Church which inhabits any one kingdom or nation, we may properly term a National Church; as, the Church of France, the Church of England, the Church of Scotland. A smaller part of the Universal Church, are the Christians that inhabit one city or town; as the Church of Ephesus, and the rest of the seven Churches mentioned in the Revelation. Two or three Christian believers united together are a Church in the narrowest sense of the word. Such was the Church in the house of Philemon, and that in the house of Nymphas, mentioned in Col. iv. 15. *A particular Church may, therefore, consist of any number of members, whether two or three, or two or three millions.* But still, whether they be larger or smaller, the same idea is to be preserved. They are 'one body;' and have 'one Spirit,' one Lord, one hope, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all."

He was not willing to accept without modification the definition of a Church in the Articles of the English Church. Because he could not consent to exclude from the Church all congregations, in which any heretical doctrines were preached, or in which the sacraments were not regularly administered.

"According to this definition," says Dr. Abel Stevens, "Wesley must have considered his own congregations, or Societies, as real Churches. If 'two or three Christian believers united together are a Church;' if 'several of those whom God hath called of the world, uniting together in one congregation formed a larger Church;' if a 'particular Church may consist of any number of members, whether two or three, or two or three millions,' what were his Societies but Churches?" He must certainly have so regarded them; for they fulfilled all the conditions of his own definition of a Church. Accordingly, in his sermon on "Schism," he uses the terms "Church" and "Society" interchangeably, as he had done in the Minutes. And in his sermon on "The Ministerial Office," in which he takes such High Church ground about ordination, after stating that the condition of admission to the Methodist Society was to "fear God and work righteousness," he asks, "In what CHURCH or congregation beside, throughout the Christian world, can members be admitted upon these terms, without any other conditions?" Does not this imply that he regarded his Society as a Church? *On what other supposition would he have provided a distinct standard of doctrine for the Methodist Societies?* If they were to belong to the Anglican Episcopal Church, this was wholly superfluous. L

It is also very significant, that when he prepared a constitution for American Methodism, as an independent Church, which had no connection whatever with the Episcopalian

Church, he prescribed the same conditions of admission to membership, the same rules of life, and the same discipline for the administration of the internal affairs of the Church, that were already in force in the English Societies. How could he regard these American societies as a Church, and deny that character to the English Societies. His Societies embraced thousands of Dissenters and others, who had joined the Methodist Connection because they were dissatisfied with their previous Church relations, as well as for other reasons. They lived and died without belonging to any other Church. Can it for a moment be supposed that Mr. Wesley regarded them as belonging to no Church, as Anglicanism unwarrantably assumes? Not so, he evidently regarded them as Churches within the National Church? As Dr. Stevens justly remarks, "The chief difficulty among 'Churchmen,' respecting Wesley's view of his United Society, arises from the fact that they have not appreciated his distinction between a simple spiritual Church and a National Church."

Though Wesley in one sermon maintains that the call to preach does not imply a right to administer the sacraments, he did not hold those views of Episcopal ordination, by which the Anglicans condemn the ministry of modern Methodism as invalid. In his address "to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and the brethren in North America," in which he justifies himself for ordaining ministers for America, preparing a ritual, and constituting American Methodism an independent Church, he says: "Lord King's account of the primitive Church convinced me many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused ;



not only for peace' sake, but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the order of the National Church to which I belonged." But the position of the Church in America removed these scruples, and made it his duty to provide for "these poor sheep in the wilderness." So far from thinking it desirable, even if practicable, to have these missionaries ordained by the Bishops of the National Church, in the same document he says, "If they would ordain them now, they would expect to govern them, *and how grievously would this entangle us!*" There is not much desire for union with "the Church" in this sentiment. It flatly contradicts the Episcopalian theories about Wesley's views.

From all this we are forced to the conclusion, that when Wesley so earnestly warned the Methodists not to separate from the Church of England, he could not mean all that modern Episcopalians suppose him to mean. He could not in fact mean anything, that would serve the purposes of their argument against modern Methodists. He could not possibly mean that the Methodist Societies were to be under the control and direction of the "Church;" for this they had never been, and he fully provided that they never should be. He could not mean that under no circumstances they should assume the functions of an independent Church; for this had already been accomplished, with his full consent, in the case of American Methodism. He could not mean that all the Methodists should attend the services of the Church of England; because for forty years in London, and afterwards in other places, Methodist service was held at the same hour as in the National Churches, with his consent. He could not mean that to separate from the National Church was unscriptural and schismatic; for his "Reasons against Separation" were all against its inexpediency—not its lawfulness. He could not mean that in no case were they to

celebrate the sacraments out of the National Churches; for by the employment of ordained ministers, (several of whom had for years acted independently of the Church and its authorities), and afterwards by the ordination of preachers for Scotland, and in some cases for England, he provided for the administration of the sacraments, in Methodist chapels to Methodist congregations. He could not mean that none but episcopally-ordained ministers had a right to administer the sacraments; for he had long held that bishops and presbyters were the same order in the primitive Church and had the same right to ordain. And in this matter he showed his faith by his deeds. He could not mean that the Conference after his death were to be irrevocably bound by theories in which they had no faith, rather than by their convictions of what would be best for the prosperity of the work of God; for he himself had sacrificed his strongest prejudices, when he felt convinced that by so doing he could accomplish more good. Though he desired that, if practicable, his people should maintain the same kind of connection with the National Church as during his life; yet, surely the relationship of Methodism to that Church at Mr. Wesley's death was not such as could be satisfactory to either ancient or modern High Churchmen. Have they ever paused to ask themselves what that connection was? As we have already said, it consisted solely in the fact that a part of the membership were communicants, and that some of the helpers and Wesley himself had formerly been ordained in that Church. This was all. As a society, and as a denomination, it had no connection whatever with the National Church. *And it was John Wesley himself who, by legal provision, made it certain that it never should have any such connection!*

3. *Equally baseless is the allegation that modern Methodists have departed from Wesley's principles.* This charge is rather

general, but from whatever point of view we regard it, it is utterly unsupported by facts. It cannot mean that we have renounced the doctrinal system of Wesley. Amid defection and heresy, Methodism has nobly "kept the faith." The doctrines of Justification by Faith alone, the New Birth, the Witness of the Spirit, Christian Perfection, and all the great verities of the gospel which distinguished Wesley's teaching, are faithfully and fully proclaimed from our pulpits. Wherever a representative of Methodism stands up to address the people, they hear no uncertain sound, and are perplexed by no strange gospel. It cannot mean that we have changed the General Rules, or the Discipline; as these are still religiously maintained. Neither can it mean that the modes of worship are changed, or that class and prayer-meetings, love-feasts and watch-nights, have been abandoned; this would be obviously incorrect. Neither can it be truthfully said, that the zeal and fire of early Methodism have declined. In spite of the complaints of croakers and scorners, Methodism never wielded so great and widespread a spiritual influence as to-day. Neither in doctrine nor discipline, in the form or spirit of our worship, nor in our guiding principles, have we departed from Wesley's principles. He was no theorist. All the methods he adopted were to meet practical wants. They were not planned beforehand. Most of them, such as the employment of lay preachers—the building of chapels—the giving of the Connection an independent legal existence—the holding of service during Church hours—the administration of the sacraments in Methodist congregations—the ordination of ministers for Scotland and America—and the organization of an independent Methodist Church in America, were things that he, at one time of his life, would have strongly opposed. These changes were all adopted at the sacrifice of

strong educational prejudices, in obedience to the higher law of doing, at all times, what in his judgment most promoted God's glory and the salvation of men. This principle was to him far above any theories of Church order, however venerable. We hope it may never be otherwise with "the People called Methodists."

The necessary modifications, in things non-essential, that have been adopted since Mr. Wesley's day, have all taken place in obedience to the same principle of Christian expediency, by which he was governed in the adoption of all the deviations from established usage, that he introduced during his life. If that principle was safe and right for Wesley, as we believe it was, it could not be evil and wrong for those who succeeded him. The changes in Methodism since his death are not so great as those that he himself introduced during his life. It is most absurd and unwarrantable to assume that if he had been living in mature manhood, during the last eighty years, he would have conceded no further modifications to give increased efficiency to the working machinery of the Church; or that no further inroads would have been made upon the prejudices of his ecclesiastical education. Yet this absurd assumption is the basis of the Anglican allegation, that modern Methodists have abandoned Wesley's principles!

4. *The assumption, which is constantly taken for granted by "Churchmen," that after the death of Wesley there was a schism in the Church of England, made by the Methodist Societies separating from that Church, is not sustained by the facts of history. No such secession really took place.*

It has been already clearly shown, that notwithstanding Mr. Wesley's strong expressions against separation from the Church of England, he left Methodism practically and organically independent of every other Church. The only

connection it had with the Establishment was the personal connection of some of its members, which has been already mentioned—a state of things that continued long after Mr. Wesley's death. There was no disruption or secession. The question to be solved by the Conference was not whether the Connection should be independent of the Church ; but whether the numerous congregations, which God had raised up by the labors of these self-denying men, and to whom they regularly preached the word of life, should be left without the sacraments, which Christ had ordained to be observed in his Church. A few of the preachers, and some of the people, who had probably been influenced by Charles Wesley's High Church theories opposed any extension of the administration of the sacraments ; and would probably have approved of giving them up, even in those cases where Wesley had allowed them. But the great majority of preachers and people believed that they were neglecting a Scriptural duty, and seriously impeding the progress of the work of God by not giving the sacraments to the members of the Societies. As the Risen Redeemer, in giving the great gospel commission to his disciples, had directly joined the work of "teaching" with "baptizing," if they believed themselves to be divinely appointed teachers and pastors, they had no more right to refuse to administer the sacraments, to those whom they regarded as proper recipients, than they had to keep back the message of truth which the Holy Ghost had called them to preach. The one, as well as the other, was included in their commission.

It was a crisis in the history of Methodism. They must either go forward and carry out consistently the principle of Christian expediency that had governed Wesley's life ; or else go backward, and arrest and cripple the great religious

movement in which God had so signally honored them. Wesley's expressed sentiments against separation could not be expected to restrain his followers, to a **greater** extent than ever they had restrained his own freedom of action.

Yet, no hasty measures were adopted. The state of the Connection elicited much prayer, deliberation, and discussion. The Conference, at its first meeting after Wesley's death, resolved to adhere fully to the plan and directions which Wesley had left for its guidance. The next year, for the sake of peace, by mutual agreement, they agreed to abstain for one year from administering the sacraments in the congregations ; and had that year a decrease of several hundreds in the number of members. The next year, it was wisely agreed that no preacher should be ordained except with the consent of the Conference. The year following, the Conference agreed that, in those places where the Societies unanimously desired the administration of the sacraments by their own preachers, they should be so given ; and that all who had been received into full connection with the Conference should be authorized to administer the sacraments, without imposition of hands. This decision practically solved the great question which Wesley left unsolved at his death, and saved the Connection from disintegration. "The plan of pacification" of 1795 was an expansion of this principle. It provided, in a judicious way, for accomplishing several necessary things for which no previous provision had been made. This plan had nothing schismatic in it. It neither recommended nor compelled any one to leave the Church of England. It made no practical change in the relationship of Methodism to the Establishment. It gave a bond of unity to Methodism. It was not the assumption of independence. It simply made such provision for the internal management of the affairs of the

Methodist Church as its previous independence had rendered necessary. It was the natural and inevitable result of Wesley's guiding principles and personal practice. Nor was it a small virtue in this plan, that it wisely and manfully repudiated the false assumption, that one man, because he happens to be an ordained minister or bishop, has a right to ordain and invest with ministerial authority anyone whom he chooses.

Like the origin and growth of Methodism, the adoption of "the plan of pacification" took place outside of the Church of England, not within it. This could not be called a schism or separation, because it was the act of a religious denomination, already wholly independent of the National Church. But if the more complete organization of Methodist agencies from 1790 to 1795 was not a separation, then there has been no such secession since Wesley's death, as has been frequently alleged. Just to test the truth of the allegation, that there was such a secession, let us take the history of one congregation, say that of City Road, as a sample of the whole Connection. Was the congregation of City Road Chapel, during Wesley's life, a congregation of the Church of England, acknowledged as such by the authorities of that Church? or was it not? If it was, when did it cease to be such? If it was not, as must be admitted by all who know the facts, then how can it have separated since Wesley's death?

The only withdrawal that ever took place was that of individuals; and the only blame that can, with any show of justice, be awarded, is to those who withdrew from the parish churches, because they could not remain without defiling their consciences. That they were amply justified in ceasing to attend these services will be admitted by all who impartially consider their circumstances. Dr. Stevens says :

“In many cases the national clergy, upon whom the Societies were dependent for the means of grace, were flagitiously immoral; they had been often found at the head of mobs attacking the Methodists, who were to receive the Eucharist from their hands the next Sabbath. In not a few instances the Methodists were denied the right of communion. Wesley himself had been expelled from the sacramental altar by the drunken curate of Epworth; his brother had been treated in like manner in Wales; his adherents were so treated in Bristol, Leeds, and parts of Derbyshire.” From these facts it is clear, that, even if we were to admit, which we do not, that there was a deplorable schism at that time, the sin and blame of it must be charged to the clergy of the Establishment, and not to the Methodists, who had really no alternative but to sacrifice the interests of the Connection, and pollute their consciences, by sinning against their own convictions.

It is utterly unfair and futile for “Churchmen” to condemn the course of the Wesleyan Conference, in the years succeeding Wesley’s death, as if its members must be judged by certain High Church theories of ordination, the truth of which they utterly repudiated. These Methodists are condemned, when judged by a certain standard. But they would reply, that the standard itself is a false, human theory, without divine authority. The motives, principles, and views of truth and duty, that inspired their course of action, must be shown to be wrong before they can be condemned. I have no hesitation in saying, they would have been recreant to their great trust, and unworthy of the position God had given them, as leaders of the grandest religious movement of modern history, if they had acted in that crisis as High Churchmen think they should have done. Their commission, as divinely-appointed ambassadors of God, had



been ratified from on high. Mr. Wesley, by his own agency, and that of others, partially provided for supplying the Methodists with the sacraments during his life ; but even this source of supply would not be available in the future. The necessity for such a provision had increased with the extension of the work. The partial concession of the sacraments, by Wesley, could only have the effect of rendering their general administration necessary at the last. Very few of the preachers shared Wesley's prejudices about separation from the State Church ; or those views respecting the priestly office which Henry Moore frankly told him were "not found in THE BOOK." Even had they deemed it right, they could not compel the people against their own convictions, to go for the sacraments to profane clergymen who despised and persecuted them.

The dissatisfaction of many Societies was so great, that already signs of division and secession had made their appearance. They felt bound in these circumstances to do what they believed was most in harmony with the teaching of God's word, and the dictates of unprejudiced reason, and best adapted to promote the salvation of men. To make Wesley's prejudices, in which they did not believe, the rule of their action would have been an unworthy course. Even if the clergy of the Establishment, and the people and preachers of Methodism, had both desired that in future the Methodist Societies should exist in the Church, and under its control, there cannot be a doubt, that to take the movement out of the hands of those who had conducted it thus far, and to place it under the charge of those who had no sympathy with it, and no qualification to direct it, would have resulted in its speedy arrest and final overthrow. But there were no such feelings on either side. The clergy of that day, with few exceptions, were either indifferent or

bitterly hostile to the Methodist preachers. And, on the other hand, the great majority of the Methodists were disgusted at the general ignorance, ungodliness, and un-Christian bitterness of the clergy; and felt that they could not with a good conscience appear to sanction such men, by attending their ministry, or receiving the sacraments at their hands. In favor of the course finally adopted were the example of Wesley in similar difficulties, the plain command of the Risen Saviour, and their strong conviction that this was best for the work of God. To deter them from adopting that course, apart from local and personal opposition, there was nothing but certain sentiments expressed by Wesley, not in harmony with his own actions, and based on opinions which they did not share; and the theory of a necessary physical Episcopal succession, which they repudiated as unscriptural, and injurious and misleading to those who embraced it.

### III.

#### EPISCOPALIAN OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE METHODIST CHURCH SHOWN TO BE BASED ON HUMAN THEORIES, THAT ARE CONTRARY TO SCRIPTURE AND UNPREJUDICED REASON.

The sectarian allegation of exclusive Episcopalian priests, that the Methodists and other Protestant Churches are not true branches of the Church of Christ, is based upon the theory that an unbroken succession of episcopally-ordained ministers is essential to constitute a true and Scriptural Church. And as the Methodists are declared to be without such a ministry, and to have unjustifiably separated from what is claimed to be the only true branch of the Holy Catholic Church in Britain and America, our ministry and sacraments are pronounced not valid, and our Church members assumed to have only such uncovenanted mercies as

the Divine bounty may bestow upon those who are outside of the pale of the true Church. The actual disadvantages of all this are not clear, however, so long as men are saved in this way.

We might reply to this, that even if the theory of the Apostolic succession were true, we are just as directly and as legitimately connected with the historic Christian Church of the past as they are. We can trace our ecclesiastical pedigree back, through John Wesley, to the very same source of which they boast. He was a duly ordained presbyter of the English Church, a Scriptural bishop, and a true ambassador by divine appointment. For our opponents to say that the succession to be of value must be episcopal, in the modern sense, and not merely presbyterial, is an unauthorized assertion, that has no support either in Scripture or in the history of the primitive Church. We are historically connected with the Church of Apostolic times as well as they. Our succession is therefore just as good as that of our Episcopalian opponents. But this I deem a small matter, as I wholly repudiate, as false and unscriptural, the dogma that mysterious ministerial grace and divine authority to ordain others are conveyed from one man to another by ordination.

1. *The theory of the necessity of an unbroken Apostolic, or Episcopal succession of ordinations is wholly without sanction or support in the New Testament.* It has never been maintained by any one, that this theory is explicitly stated in the Holy Scriptures. Neither Christ nor his Apostles anywhere declare that ordination bestows the exclusive right to ordain others without the sanction of the Church; or that such an unbroken succession is essential to a true Church. There is not one word, even, referring to a lineal succession of bishops from the Apostles, or to a lineal succession of

ministers of any kind. If this doctrine were true, the New Testament would never have been silent respecting something essential to a true Church. The fact that Timothy and Titus are exhorted to appoint bishops in Ephesus and Crete, cannot help the successionists, as long as the particular manner of such appointments is not specified. The bishops ordained by these pastors would doubtless be appointed, in a way similar to that in which other bishops, and the seven deacons were appointed. They were first chosen and approved by the Church, and then set apart to the office of the ministry by laying on of hands and prayer. Indeed, the fact that pastors and evangelists, like Timothy and Titus, had the right to ordain bishops, during the lives of the Apostles, shows clearly that the Apostles claimed no exclusive right of ordaining bishops, and, therefore, there could have been no belief in the succession theory in the Apostolic Church. The language of St. Paul to Timothy, reminding him of the gift he had received by the laying on of his hands, demands no theory of succession to enable us to comprehend its meaning. All the attempts at adducing Scriptural proof for this theory, consist in far-fetched and strained interpretations of passages that cannot fairly bear any such construction. We know that in the Apostolic Church men were set apart to any special Christian work by laying on of hands. But this no more proves the modern doctrine of Apostolic Succession, than ordination to ministerial work among Methodists and Presbyterians proves that these Churches hold that dogma.

An examination of the Scripture references to the Apostolic office proves conclusively that it was extraordinary and temporary. They were the chosen witnesses of Christ's resurrection, appointed directly by Christ himself, and endowed with the power of working miracles, to attest the

truth of their apostleship. From the very nature of the Apostolic office, and the qualifications it demanded, the Apostles could have no successors. None since have possessed the marks and qualifications of the Apostles. Indeed, so evident is it that the New Testament gives no countenance to this modern invention, that such Anglican divines as Hammond, Dodwell, Beveridge, and others, while maintaining this theory, have confessed that support for it must be found in later writings, rather than in the New Testament. Because the Apostles had power by the laying on of their hands to impart the Holy Ghost, this surely can be no justification for those, who possess no such power, to attempt to magnify their own importance, by pretending to a gift of which they are destitute. Such men may more fitly be said to be the successors of Simon Magus than of the Apostles. He also desired the power of bestowing the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands, that it might give him special honor and importance in the eyes of the people ; but he had neither lot nor part in the matter.

Though we repudiate this false and unfounded dogma of succession, we believe in a true and Scriptural Apostolic succession ; “ made, not according to the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.” We fully endorse the following sentiments of the Rev. Henry Bleby :—“ All faithful ministers of the word of life, possessing the spirit of the Apostles, preaching the doctrines which the Apostles preached and no other, and imitating the zeal and devotedness of the Apostles, are their true successors in that ministry of the Gospel which they were the first to exercise, and which is God’s instrumentality to enlighten and save the world,—but not in the Apostleship. This is the only sense in which any can succeed them. And those who are destitute of the piety and zeal and devoted-

ness of the Apostles, or depart in doctrine from their teaching, are in no sense whatever the successors of those men of God. Call them what you may,—Popes, Bishops, Priests, or Deacons,—they are but intruders into an office to which God never called them, the duties of which they are not qualified to fulfil, and the assumption of which will end only in exposing them to shame and everlasting contempt. ‘If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.’”—(*High Church Claims Investigated.*)

2. *The High Church theory of Episcopacy and Succession, is contrary to the belief and practice of the Christian Church, in the period immediately succeeding the Apostolic age.* Mosheim says: “The rulers of the people were either presbyters or bishops,—titles which in the New Testament are undoubtedly applied to the same order of men.” De Pressense says: “The bishopric in the primitive form was identical with the office of elder.” And again, “Regarded from the stand-point of Episcopal theories, it is impossible to harmonize the evidence of the Fathers as to Clement’s (Romanus) entry upon his office.” Lord Chancellor King shows, by unanswerable arguments, that in the primitive Church bishops and presbyters were of the same order; and that presbyters took part in ordaining bishops and deacons, and performed all the official acts of bishops. Mosheim warns us against confounding the primitive bishops with those of later time who were called by that name. He says, “A bishop, during the first and second century, was a person who had the care of one Christian assembly, which at that time was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house.” Many similar testimonies might be quoted, but this will suffice to show, that the modern type of Episcopacy, and the theory of three distinct orders of ministers were unknown in the Apostolic Church.

The theory, that it is the prerogative of a bishop alone to receive and ordain men to the office of the ministry, finds no support in the practice or belief of the primitive Church. Lord King says : "When the bishop of a Church was dead, all the people of that Church met together in one place to choose a new bishop." He quotes several examples from the fathers, in proof of the prevalence of this practice. After the bishop was chosen by the people, a number of pastors or bishops met and ordained him in the presence of the congregation. He quotes Bishop Cyprian as writing from his exile respecting his own habit of consulting the people, "therein imitating the example of the Apostles and Apostolic men, who ordained none but with the approbation of the whole Church." Mosheim says : "It was therefore the assembly of the people, which chose rulers and teachers, or received them by a free and authoritative consent, when recommended by others." Lord King also quotes Clement of Rome as stating that, in the planting of the Churches, the Apostles and the Apostolic men "ordained bishops and deacons, with the consent of the whole Church." So far from one prelate being invested with exclusive authority to ordain, King tells us, "the more bishops there were present at an instalment, the more did its validity and unquestionableness appear." He cites cases in which three, five, sixteen, and even twenty-five bishops (pastors) took part in the ordination of a bishop. Wickliffe, the great Reformer, says : "I affirm that in the time of Paul, the presbyter and bishop were names of the same office." This view is maintained by Calvin, Erasmus, Beza, Melancthon, and most of the divines of the Reformation period in England. Though the early fathers are anxious to trace their authority for doctrines to the Apostles and their companions, I know of no case where any of them appeal to an unbroken lineal succession of ordi-

nations as the proof of their ministerial authority. Space will not allow me to pursue this argument. The difference in this matter between the practice of the primitive Church, and that of modern Romanists and Episcopalians, is as great as it well can be. Yet these two sects would fain persuade us that they are the only Churches that properly regard the example of Christian antiquity! But their theories are a much more modern invention. The Apostolic Church knew them not, and could not, therefore, sanction them.

3. *This theory of Apostolical Succession, and exclusively Episcopal ordination, is not the doctrine of the Church of England, as presented in her standards, or expounded by her noblest sons.* Mr. Bleby pertinently says: "It is not so much as named in the Articles, the Liturgy or the Homilies of that Church, and it is strongly and plainly repudiated by many of the Reformers." In the controversy that arose respecting the Dean of Canterbury and the late Bishop Cummins partaking of the Lord's Supper in a Presbyterian Church, it was conclusively shown, that the Church of the Reformation in England did not, either in her practice or teaching, maintain that Episcopal orders alone were valid. Some of her greatest divines maintained the validity of non-episcopal orders. For many years after the Reformation, Presbyterian divines were received in England and admitted to parishes without reordination, as Peter Martyr and Martin Bucer, who held seats as professors of theology in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Though the theory may have been held by some divines, it was not till the time of Charles I. that it was acted upon as the law of the Church. As Professor Fisher recently showed in an able article in the *N. Y. Independent*, "the doctrine of apostolical succession, in the sense that Churches without bishops are destitute of a lawful ministry, had no consider-



able number of adherents in the English Church until, in the reigns of James I. and Charles I. the contest with Puritanism drove a portion of the Episcopal party to this extreme." The change in the practice of the Church was caused, mainly, by the bigoted and intolerant Bishop Laud ; of whom Macaulay says, that "of all the prelates of the Anglican Church, he had departed farthest from the principles of the Reformation, and had drawn nearest to Rome."

Cranmer, the martyr-Archbishop, though educated in Romish ideas, wholly repudiated this doctrine of succession. He maintained that ceremonies of induction, however appropriate, were not necessary. His own words are : "In the New Testament, he that is appointed to be Bishop or Priest needeth no consecration by the Scripture ; for election or appointing thereto is sufficient." And as Dr. Fisher says, even "Whitgift, the great opponent of Puritanism, never impeaches the validity of the ordination practised in the foreign churches. He recognizes them, as Cranmer, Parker, and Grindal had done before him. Hooker, the representative and champion of Episcopacy, and Dean Field, his distinguished associate, explicitly allow Presbyterian ordination in the case of the reformed churches on the Continent." Bishop White, quoted by Mr. Bleby, says : "Personal and local succession only, and in itself, maketh not the Church apostolical." "Wheresoever the true faith contained in the Scriptures is professed and embraced, there is the whole and full nature of an apostolic Church ; for the external succession we care not." Bishop Jewell says : "The grace of God is promised to pious souls, and to those who fear God, and is not affixed to Bishops' chairs and succession." In the list of great divines who denied the succession theory in the seventeenth century stand the illustrious names of Bishop

Stillington and Archbishop Usher. As to our own times, it is only necessary to mention the names of Whateley and Arnold.

Stillington, Bishop of Norwich, was one of the noblest men the English Church ever produced. He not only opposed this unscriptural dogma himself, but in his celebrated *Irenicum* he classifies the views of eminent English and foreign divines respecting Episcopacy. He shows that most of the English divines, since the Reformation, had held that the form of Church government was mutable, depending on the wisdom of the magistrate and of the Church. He quotes Cranmer approvingly, as to ordination not being at all essential. Archbishop Whitgift, Bishops Bridges, Hooker and others, it is shown, advocated the same general view. Secondly, he refers to the divines who had believed in the original parity of the clergy, yet considered Episcopacy lawful. Here are placed Calvin, Beza, Melancthon, and others. Thirdly, he enumerates those who judge Episcopacy to be the primitive form, yet look not on it as necessary. Here come Bishops Jewel, Fulk, Field, and many more. All these men who are named under the three heads, whatever their views respecting the origin and antiquity of episcopacy, considered it neither necessary on the one hand, nor wrong and intolerable on the other. Cranmer explicitly declares that bishops and priests were "one office at the beginning of Christ's religion;" and a statement to the effect "that in the New Testament there is no mention made of any degrees or distinctions in orders, but only of deacons or ministers, and priests or bishops," was subscribed by thirteen bishops with a great number of other ecclesiastics. So that these High Churchmen, who so recklessly charge the Methodists with deserting Wesley's principles, are themselves recreant to the great Protestant principles of

the illustrious Reformers to whom England owes so much. It is no part of my design to condemn those who prefer the Episcopal form of government. But these facts are sufficient to show beyond question, that the views of Episcopal ordination, now maintained by High Churchmen, are a departure from the simpler and more Scriptural faith of the Reformation—a long stride back towards Rome.

4. *The alleged succession is not historically true.* I mean, that there has been no such unbroken succession of ordinations in the past. Such a succession cannot be proved. And it is morally certain that such an unbroken chain never existed. The world recently saw that the champions of popery in Rome could not even prove that St. Peter was ever at Rome, to say nothing of his ordinations. The facts already mentioned, that in the primitive Church several pastors took part in each ordination, and that the modern popish view of ordination was unknown, would naturally render it impossible to trace each ordination to any one bishop or presbyter. The "Church" curate who comes with a printed list of his ecclesiastical pedigree, up to the Apostles, must have wonderful confidence in the ignorance of those whom he expects to accept his list with unquestioning faith. Many eminent ministers and laymen of the English Church, who have made this subject a special study, have confessed that the historical succession is utterly untenable. Chillingworth said, "I am fully persuaded there hath been no such succession." Lord Macaulay says: "Even if it were possible, which it assuredly is not, to prove that the Church had the Apostolical orders in the third century, it would be impossible to prove that those orders were not in the twelfth century so far lost that no ecclesiastic could be certain of the legitimate descent of his own spiritual character. . . . We see no satisfactory proof of the fact that the Church of England possesses the Apostolic succession."

Bishop Hoadly says: "It hath not pleased God in his providence to keep up any proof of the least probability, or moral possibility, of a regular uninterrupted succession; but there is a great appearance, and humanly speaking, a certainty to the contrary that the succession hath often been interrupted. Dr. Comber, an eminent divine, quoted by Mr. Bleby, says, "There is neither truth nor certainty in the pretended succession of the first popes." Bishop Stillingfleet says: "Come we therefore to Rome, and here the succession is as muddy as the Tiber itself. . . . The succession so much pleaded by the writers of the primitive Church, was not a succession of persons in Apostolic power, but a succession in Apostolic doctrine." Archbishop Whately says: "There is not a minister in all Christendom who is able to trace up, with approach to certainty, his spiritual pedigree." John Wesley, whom "Churchmen" are so fond of quoting for the benefit of Methodists, says: "The uninterrupted succession I know to be a fable which no man ever did or can prove." Let it be remembered that these testimonies are from "Churchmen" whom it would naturally gratify to find evidence of an unbroken succession, whatever might be their estimate of its value. Yet this is the dogma on the assumed truth of which High Churchmen disfranchise all non-Episcopal Churches of their Christian birth-right!

5. *The dogma of a necessary Episcopal Succession and the sacramentarian theories that result from it, are unreasonable and absurd, and baneful in their influence on those churches that accept them.*

I make this charge advisedly, as my deliberate conviction. At a time when these notions are misleading thousands, it would be recreancy to truth to speak of them with any mawkish leniency. We have too long acted merely on the

defensive against men deeply tainted with Romish heresies ; as if we had done our whole duty when we disproved their disparaging allegations against ourselves, and showed that our Church rested on a Scriptural foundation. Not so : we should unmask their unscriptural pretensions, and show the people that to follow these blind leaders of the blind is to renounce the essential principles of Protestantism and embrace irrational, unscriptural, and pernicious theories, invented by the Church of Rome to minister to priestly pride and intolerance.

What can be more absurd, than for men to pretend to be the direct successors of the Apostles, whose special office and gifts show that they could have no successors ? Is it not unreasonable to assume that God would appoint conditions of the genuineness of his Church in the world that were almost certain to be broken and obscured ? It is most unreasonable to suppose that God, who desires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, would make an outward ceremony of greater importance than that personal holiness of character which it is the object of all religion to promote, and which God delights to honor. It is absurd, when the English Church at the Reformation broke away from the authority of the Church of Rome, and its clergy forfeited the conditions on which they had been ordained, and were excommunicated as heretics, to assume that still their ministerial authority rested on their previous ordination by the popish bishops. It is both revolting and absurd, to maintain that a God in whose sight the wicked are an abomination, would choose ungodly, profane, vicious and heretical men, such as many of the Romish bishops and popes notoriously were, as the only persons authorized to appoint his messengers to call men from sin to holiness and from the power of Satan unto God. Platina says the Popes "left no wickedness unpractised."

The description given of their character by Prideaux, Bishop of Worcester, is simply horrible. Many of the English bishops before the Reformation were unprincipled plotters, purchasing their offices in the most corrupt manner. St. Paul explicitly declares, that no such ungodly and profane persons "have any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Yet through this polluted stream, the modern Anglican claims that he has received priestly authority. Well may Mr. Bleby say, "No wonder that there are so many infidels, when this is gravely proposed to be believed as a part of the Christian religion!" It is absurd for High Churchmen to claim that their sacraments are special and divinely appointed channels of grace, when those who use them frequently have far less faith and charity, humility, forbearance and brotherly love, than many "Dissenters," who have only uncovenanted mercies. It is absurd to think that God would richly bless with spiritual prosperity, people whose course was in open violation of his will and law—yet he blesses and rewards what "Churchmen" regard as "the deadly sin of schism." They dare not deny that a man may get to heaven without being a member of their Church. Yet there is a strange contradiction in the idea of any one being a good and useful man in life, enjoying God's favor, and being received into heaven's eternal rest at last, without being a member of God's Church—or living in harmony with the divine arrangements and conditions for the salvation of men! But the greatest absurdity of all is to believe that a dogma that brings forth such bad fruit as uncharitableness, bigotry, pharisaic pride, formality and popish heresy, is of God's planting. The blessed Redeemer says, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." Unquestionably, this dogma of priestly succession is the baneful root from which the main

corruptions of Romanism have grown. It is not harmless. It is soul poison.

“The whole history of the Romish Church proves this ; for from this usurpation of Apostolic power has proceeded all that is corrupt, and despotic, and destructive in Romanism ; all the darkness, and superstition, and idolatry, and the cruelties and bloodshedding with which an antichristian system has overspread and cursed the world for ages. It is the fundamental principle of antichrist. Examine, and you will find this to be the very corner-stone upon which the Papal throne is erected ; it is the band which binds the triple crown upon the head of “the Man of Sin,” who has so long usurped a false authority in the Church, and plundered the world of its rights and liberties. And give it room to exert its baneful influence in the hands of its present claimants,—let it have full scope,—and it will work out similar results. It will banish all spiritual religion from the Church, overturn the liberties of nations, and fill the world, so far as it can reach, with spiritual darkness, and superstition, and moral death. Its tendency is always, and only, to produce mischief and ruin. The arrogance, bigotry, and intolerance of modern High-Churchism, the superstitious forms and Popish practices which the Ritualists have introduced into many Churches, and the gross corruption of sound doctrine and grievous heresies which are so often making their appearance in the Anglican Episcopal Church, are only the early developments of this evil principle,—the fruits of the same poisonous root, which has already produced a dreadful harvest of evil to the human race.”—(*Rev. H. Bleby.*)

6. *Anglican High Church ideas of the conditions that determine the validity of the Ministerial office, and of the relation of the sacraments to salvation, are contrary to the spirit and teaching of the New Testament.*

I have already shown that there is no sanction given in the Holy Scriptures to the theories and pretensions of ritualistic Episcopalian priests respecting ordination and Episcopal succession. But I go further than this, and say that the idea of religion which these theories present, and the spirit which they generate in those who receive them, are neither Apostolic nor Christian. These priestly assailants of Methodism assume the existence of three divinely appointed ministerial orders; but the New Testament clearly shows us, that bishops and presbyters were names applied to designate the same order of preaching pastors; beside whom there was no other order, but that of deacons, who were stewards appointed to manage the secular and financial affairs of the Church. (See Acts vi.) They assume, also, that it is the prerogative of a single bishop to select and ordain ministers; but the New Testament shows us that Timothy was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, or company of pastors; and the most authentic records of the primitive Church show that several pastors generally took part in ordaining those who had been previously selected by the whole Church. The successionists declare that none but bishops, in the modern sense, have any right to ordain; but we learn in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, that it was "certain prophets and teachers" that ordained Barnabas and Paul; and the best authorities show, as we have seen, that the practice of Christian antiquity gives no countenance to this theory. Their theory also compels them to maintain the revolting doctrine that a man may be ungodly and profane in life, and heretical in his belief, and yet be an authorized minister of Christ; with authority to appoint and ordain others to the work of the ministry. But the Apostle Peter declares that Judas fell from his Apostleship "by transgression"; the



Apostle John tells us, "he that committeth sin is of the devil"; and the Apostle Paul declares, "if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." The Psalmist says: "But unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth; seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee." (Ps. l. 16.)

*The test of the successionists is un-apostolic.* They make each minister's status and authority depend upon the ecclesiastical standing of those who baptized and ordained him. The Apostles test all teachers by their gifts—the soundness of their doctrines—the holiness of their lives—the manner in which they fulfilled their ministry—and the success of their labors in bringing sinners to a saving knowledge of Christ. To this "more sure word of prophecy" we appeal from the unauthorized and unjust judgment of priestly egotism. The Master himself, when warning his disciples against false teachers, said: "By their fruits shall ye know them." The authority and validity of the ministry of every Church must be tested by a Scriptural and Apostolic standard, and not by an unauthorized human test that sets aside the divine standards. Paul, throughout his epistles, frequently vindicates the claims of himself and his fellow-workers, as ambassadors of Christ. And he always does this by proofs and evidences, not only different from those which are appealed to by all who lean towards Romanism, but by such as are condemnatory of the Romish and Tractarian theories. My space will only allow me to give a few examples from the Apostolic writings, out of numerous passages that might be quoted in proof of this assertion.

In all the vindications of himself and fellow-ministers Paul gives special prominence to their being *called of God*, and being therefore divinely appointed. "Paul an Apostle,

not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father." (Gal. i. 1.) "Who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit." "For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel." (1 Cor. ix. 16.) The *doctrines* they preached are also mentioned in proof of their claims as messengers of Christ. "For I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." (Cor. ii. 2.) "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. iii. 11.) "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Peter i. 16.) "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.) The *manner* in which they performed the work which God gave them to do, is also cited in token that they were divinely called and qualified. "For the love of Christ constraineth us." (2 Cor. v. 14.) "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." (2 Cor. iv. 4.) "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more; in labors more abundant," &c. (2 Cor. xi. 23.) The *gifts* with which God had endowed them were another evidence that their ministry was according to the will of God. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth; but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." (2 Cor. ii. 13.) "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." (1 Cor. ii. 3.) "Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." (2 Cor. ii. 12.)

This claim to be ambassadors from God, was *recognized*

*and ratified by the Church.* “By manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of Cod.” (2 Cor. iv. 2.) “We have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.” (2 Cor. xi. 6.) “As ye know what manner of men we were among among you, for your sake.” (1 Thess. i. 5.) “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe.” (1 Thess. iii. 10.) “And they glorified God in me.” (Gal. i. 24.) “But received me as an angel of God.” (Gal. iv. 14.) But that which is most frequently referred to as the token of God’s approbation, the seal of his approval, by which the divine authority of their commission was ratified before the world, is *the success of their labors*, in the conversion and salvation of sinners. Hear the great Apostle of the Gentiles: “Now, thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.” (2 Cor. ii. 14.) “If I be not an Apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.” (1 Cor. ix. 2.) “Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men.” (2 Cor. iii. 2.) “For ye are our glory and our joy.” (1 Thess. ii. 20.) “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.” (1 Thess. i. 5.) From the defensive tone of these declarations, especially those in both epistles to the Corinthians, it is evident that Paul’s apostleship, if not his ministerial “orders,” was questioned by sticklers for regular order in that day. It is therefore highly instructive to study the arguments by which he vindicated his ministerial character and authority.

We maintain, without any feeling of self-complacent denominational pride, but with gratitude to God, that the

same argument and evidences used by the Apostle Paul may be justly and successfully applied to demonstrate the Scriptural validity of the Ministry of the Methodist Church. All branches of Methodism have firmly maintained the inward call of the Holy Ghost as an essential qualification for the ministry. And, as far as human fidelity and wisdom could prevent, none have been introduced to this work among us, but those who have been so called. The evil custom of educating boys for the ministry, without regard to their religious or intellectual character, simply that they might get a living, has never prevailed among Methodists. Nor can it be denied, that the Methodist Church has faithfully guarded and maintained purity of doctrine. Amid opposition and reproach, we have held fast the faith "once delivered unto the saints." Whatever any minister's gifts may be, if he preach what our Church deems unscriptural and dangerous doctrine, he cannot preach it from a Methodist pulpit. Hence, wherever a Methodist preacher stands up to instruct a congregation, the people hear an explicit exposition of the same doctrines the Apostles taught. A faithful testimony has been borne by the Methodist pulpit against both the ritualism and formalism of Puseyism and Popery, and the plausible speculations of popular infidelity. We have reason for grateful pride, in the gifts and piety of the men whom God has raised up among us to be the messengers of life to dying sinners. In godly self-sacrifice, abundant labors, unfaltering faith, true Christian eloquence, and Christly sympathy for the unsaved, the ministry of no Church since the Apostles presents a brighter record.

The success of this ministry has been wonderful, "even our enemies themselves being judges." Methodism has swept like waves of blessing and salvation over Europe and

and America. Hundreds of thousands, who were once ignorant and guilty rejectors of Christ and his salvation, through Methodist instrumentalities have been converted from the errors of their ways, and lifted up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Not in Britain and America only have these results followed Methodist labor; but in Asia, Africa, Australia, and the islands of the Pacific, have Methodist missionaries won such glorious victories for Christ as forever vindicate, against all the petty cavils of sectarian bigotry, their claim as divinely-appointed ambassadors from a Risen Saviour to a perishing world. It is not too much to say, that all the ends, for which Christ instituted ministers and pastors in his Church, have been successfully accomplished by the agency of the Methodist ministry. These Scriptural evidences of Divine approval may be unworthy of the regard of High Church priests, who cherish a comfortable sense of their superiority, derived from being ordained by a bishop who is in this imaginary and un-Apostolic Succession; but they must have weight with all who do not discard the teachings of God's word and the conclusions of common sense. These Apostolic qualifications have been gratefully recognized and ratified by the Church. We repudiate the theory of one man, by virtue of his ordination, having a right to invest any one he pleases with ministerial authority, without the consent of the Church. No man is even taken on trial for the Methodist Ministry, till he is recommended by the representatives of the laity, in the Quarterly Meeting of the official members. Those who know him best must testify to the gifts, grace, and usefulness of each candidate. In the words of the late Bishop Janes, of the M. E. Church:—"We do not claim that the judgment of the Church is infallible in this matter. But we do believe, that when a man professes to be called of God to this holy

ministry, whose Christian character is a guarantee of his sincerity, and the Church finds in him the gifts, grace, and fruit which a true minister must have, they can decide the question more certainly and safely than any other persons or authorities. So that the ministry of the Methodist Church do not hail from John the Baptist, or from Peter, or from John Wesley. We seek no investiture from prelate or primate. We have succeeded to no dead men's places; we derive authority from no dead men's credentials; there is no smell of the sepulchre about us; our call is direct from our risen and living Lord, recognized and authenticated by a living Church, made valid and vital by the living God. We are the living ministers of to-day by Divine appointment."

"If the Corinthian Church was a Christian Church, then is the Methodist Church a Christian Church. If the ministry by whose planting and watering the Corinthian Church was raised up and edified was a Christian ministry, then is the Methodist ministry a Christian ministry. We know this from the concurrent consciousness of the ministry and the Church. We know it from the sameness of their spiritual endowments and divine qualifications. We know it from the similarity of the spirit and manner of executing their ministry. We know it from the equal devotedness of the ministry. We know it from the oneness of the doctrines taught. We know it from the same legitimate results—the same soul-saving issues. We know it, because we see everywhere our letters of commendation in the handwriting of God. We see everywhere the seals of our apostleship on the hearts of the people. No ministry ever knew it more certainly, or rejoiced in it more divinely, or labored in it more Scripturally. 'Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of

us, and Israel acknowledge us not. Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting.'"

The frequent references, made in Anglican convocations and periodicals, to the possible incorporation of English Wesleyan Methodism with the National Church, however well meant, betray a surprising ignorance of the feelings and views of Wesleyan Ministers and people. It is generally assumed that the Wesleyans view the matter from the Episcopal standpoint—that they have some secret misgivings about the legitimacy of their present position, which Episcopal ordination would remove. All this is the natural mistake of men, who live so much in the narrow circle of their own thoughts and prejudices, that they are unable to comprehend the views of those who differ from them. Unless this be so, it is unaccountable that at the present time, when Romanism and infidel rationalism are flourishing in the high places of the Anglican Church, and men of liberal views and catholic sympathies are being forced by the unscriptural intolerance of her assumptions, to withdraw from her communion, Methodists should be expected to tamely renounce the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, and become absorbed by the Episcopal Church. Even if such a union were practicable, what advantages has that Church to offer Methodists? Would they by such a change gain a more Scriptural, godly, and successful ministry? Would they secure a Church whose doctrines are more Scriptural, or whose administration and godly discipline is more efficient? Would they gain a more simple and spiritual forms of worship, or be better provided with means, adapted to promote growth in grace? Would they secure greater unity of doctrine, or greater harmony of Christian worship and work, than they now possess? Only

one answer can be truthfully given to these questions. I know that those who believe that Christians, uniting to worship God according to their consciences, are guilty of "the dreadful sin of schism," think great sacrifices should be made for "the unity of the Church." They should, however, remember that the unity which the Scriptures commend, is not mere unity of name and organization; but oneness of faith and spirit. It can hardly be questioned, that the position of the different English Nonconformist Churches, which are standing side by side, doing the work of the Master in a spirit of true Christian brotherhood, comes far nearer the Scriptural idea of unity, than the nominal unity of one denomination, in which Popery and Protestantism, Calvinism and Arminianism, infidelity and orthodoxy, all surge in ceaseless collision. The Episcopalian priests who sneer at the glorious Protestant Reformation, and craftily apply their energies to introduce ritualistic practices, which symbolize Popish doctrines, are the real schismatics, disturbing the peace of the Church with their papal novelties, and creating schisms and parties within her bosom. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away."

The dogma of Succession leads its adherents intolerantly and unjustly to oppose, disparage, and denounce, as schismatics and enemies of the truth, all who repudiate those human inventions which they teach as divine doctrines. Our Lord and his Apostles, on the contrary, displayed a liberal and catholic spirit towards all who were sincerely seeking after God. Christ rebuked the narrow zeal of his disciples for forbidding the man that followed not with them to cast out devils in his name. Peter declares "that in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." John declares, without any reference to baptismal



regeneration, that "every one that loveth is born of God." Paul rejoiced in whatever way Christ was preached ; and prayed that grace might "be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." The spirit that breathes in these divine declarations is utterly opposed to the sectarian intolerance of modern sacramentarians. It is bad enough when Christians fail to conform to the gospel which they own as a standard of duty ; but these despisers of better men than themselves make a virtue of bigotry and intolerance ; and would have us believe that they are doing God service, when they pour their petty contempt on some of the holiest and most useful of his saints.

But in nothing are the succession and sacramentarian theories of the Ritualistic school more clearly contrary to the Holy Scriptures, than in their marks and tests of true Christian discipleship. Soundness of faith, and inward and outward godliness are thrust out of sight ; and the main question is whether one has received the sacraments from a duly ordained "priest" of what is alleged to be the true Church. But in the New Testament such a test is never named. On the contrary, a personal experience of the saving power of God, producing the fruits of holiness in the life, is the invariable test of Christian character. Love to each other is the Master's own sign of true discipleship. The Apostle John says, "Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." The Apostle Paul says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision ; but faith which worketh by love." "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

This popish theory of Succession also prompts those who accept it to disparage the preaching of God's word ; as if

this were altogether secondary to the administration of the sacraments, which are regarded as the main instruments of regeneration and sanctification. Not so thought Paul. He counts it his highest honor and joy to be a preacher of the gospel. He says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Very far from believing the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, he thanks God that he had baptized none of them, but Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas; and then adds, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." To these same Corinthians, concerning whom he rejoices that he had not baptized them, he says in the same epistle, (1 Cor. iv. 15,) "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." This clearly implies that he claimed to be the spiritual father of many, by the preaching of the gospel, whom he had not baptized at all. Will the sacramentarians explain how, on their theory, he could be the instrumental cause of the regeneration of those he had not baptized? And Peter, some of whose words have been compelled to do service as proofs of baptismal regeneration, says: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever." So also the Apostle James: "Of his own will begat us with the word of truth." Not the sacraments, however Scriptural and important in their own place, but the Gospel, Paul declares to be the "power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." For, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

In short, the New Testament constantly magnifies the in-

ternal and spiritual—the fruits of the Spirit ; the successionists strenuously magnify the outward and ceremonial, and obscure with their puerile inventions the great central truths of the gospel. It is a perversion to connect the word “ Apostolic ” with this dogma of succession ; for nothing can be more *un-Apostolic*. There was, however, a class of men in the days of our Saviour whose successors these priestly sacramentarians might, with much greater show of justice, claim to be. I mean the Pharisees, with whom they have certainly much more in common than with the Apostles. These ancient Pharisees were proud that they could trace their pedigree up to Abraham, and felt a self-complacent satisfaction that they belonged to the race to whom God had deigned to stand in covenant relationship—all very much after the manner of our modern Tractarians. They “ trusted in themselves that they were righteous,” and despised Gentiles, publicans and others, who had nothing but uncovenanted mercies to depend upon. In this also the modern exclusionists are clearly in the Succession. The Pharisees were distinguished by a love for a showy and ceremonial style of worship, that had very little heart in it. Those who attend at the ritualistic Anglican Churches of the present day know that many of the Episcopal priests are faithfully copying this ancient model. The Pharisees were specially distinguished by exalting and magnifying the importance of small things, relating to external rites and observances, while they overlooked matters of weighty import. The Saviour rebuked them for this error, when he said, “ Ye pay tithe of anise, mint, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith.” This feature is also strikingly characteristic of their modern successors, who also make so much of the outward signs in the sacraments, and mere matters of ceremonial in worship, that there is

grave reason to fear that the most essential things are forgotten. It is deemed very important that a Christian should have the right man to baptize him ; but whether he ever really experience that renewal of the Holy Ghost, of which baptism is only the sign, is often wholly overlooked. It is deemed a vital matter that a minister be ordained to the work of the ministry, by some one that he believes can induct him into a direct lineal succession from the Apostles ; but anxiety to possess the spirit, faith, zeal, holiness, and success in the conversion of sinners, that distinguished the Apostles, is sometimes "omitted" from consideration, as if it was by no means so important. "The traditions of the elders" and "Fathers" are referred to, as if any departure from these were a fatal error ; but the doctrines of justification by faith, sanctification by the Spirit, the assurance of hope, and brotherly kindness towards all who love Christ, are obscured, or omitted as unworthy of special regard. Truly they make the word of God of none effect by their traditions. I need not pursue the analogy further. It is certainly not merely fanciful. The family likeness is indisputable. The contrast with the spirit of New Testament Christianity is equally indisputable. Christianity is a spiritual religion. In this it is in bold contrast with the ceremonial religion it superseded. To the Jews it came as a deliverance from carnal ordinances, "imposed upon them till the time of the Reformation." If then, according to the Succession theory, an outward physical act, like ordination by imposition of hands, is a vital and essential thing, there is nothing else like this in the whole Christian religion—a proof that the theory is false.

No candid and unbiased seeker after truth can study the precepts, doctrines, and examples of the New Testament, without being convinced that the pretensions and distinc-

tive teaching of the sacramentarian school are antagonistic to the simplicity and spirituality that distinguish alike the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. *The external, priestly, and ritualistic type of religion, beyond all question, is not the religion of JESUS of Nazareth, as taught in his discourses, and expounded and exemplified by his holy Apostles.*

In view of all these considerations, the Methodist people can afford to calmly despise the intolerant assumptions of their High Church assailants; remembering the words of the Apostle: "Let not then your good be evil spoken of; for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—(Rom. xiv. 16, 17.)